

Claims

- [c1] 53. A method of controlling an Internet browser interface displayable by an Internet browser on a display of a computer, and enabling a user of the computer and Internet browser to access and navigate the Internet and to receive and display on the computer display one or more Web pages from one or more Internet sites, including the display of a Web page from a predetermined Internet site, the Internet browser having at least one Internet browser toolbar having at least one toolbar button providing a predetermined functionality to the user of the computer and Internet browser, said method comprising the steps of:
- (a)providing, at the predetermined Internet site, access to a program for controlling the Internet browser interface; and
 - (b)making available for downloading by the predetermined Internet site, a file for causing the display of a user toolbar that makes additional functionality that is not part of the Internet browser prior to download available to the user after download as part of the Internet browser interface, such that once the user toolbar is displayed the user toolbar remains displayed and said additional functionality remains available to the user regardless of a subsequent Internet site to which the Internet browser is caused to navigate after download.
- [c2] 54. A method as recited by claim 53, wherein the user toolbar includes an interface object and is customizable by the user to provide user-selected functionality in the user toolbar.
- [c3] 55. A method as recited by claim 53, wherein the file comprises an ActiveX control.
- [c4] 56. A method as recited by claim 53, wherein the file comprises a Plug-in.
- [c5] 57. A method as recited by claim 54, wherein the interface object is a toolbar button.
- [c6] 58. A method as recited by claim 54, wherein the interface object is a search window that enables the user to initiate a search at the predetermined Internet site regardless of the Internet site to which the computer is connected via the browser at the time the search is initiated.
- [c7] 59. A method as recited by claim 53, wherein the predetermined Internet site maintains user-specific information for a plurality of users, including the user of the computer and Internet browser, said method further comprising the step of making available for downloading by the predetermined Internet site, information specific to the user of the computer and Internet browser for defining all or part of the user toolbar and wherein all or part of the display of the user toolbar is dependent upon the information, specific to the

user of the computer and Internet browser, downloaded by the predetermined Internet site.

- [c8] 60. A method as recited by claim 59, further comprising the step of making available for downloading by the predetermined Internet site, additional information, specific to the user of the computer and Internet browser, for defining all or part of the user toolbar, and wherein all or part of the display of the user toolbar is dependent upon the downloaded information.
- [c9] 61. An Internet browser interface displayable by an Internet browser on a display of a computer, the Internet browser facilitating connection between the computer and one or more Internet sites, including a predetermined Internet site, the Internet browser having at least one Internet browser toolbar having predetermined functionality available to a user of the computer and Internet browser, the Internet browser further facilitating display on the computer display of one or more Web pages from the one or more Internet sites, and display of Web pages from the predetermined Internet site, said Internet browser interface, after being enabled via connection to said predetermined Internet site, including a user toolbar having additional functionality in addition to said predetermined functionality that is displayed as part of the Internet browser interface along with and in addition to the Internet browser toolbar while the Internet browser is activated, regardless of which one of said one or more Internet sites the computer is connected to via the Internet browser.
- [c10] 62. An Internet browser interface as recited by claim 61, wherein said user toolbar includes an interface object and is customizable by the user.
- [c11] 63. An Internet browser interface as recited by claim 62, wherein said interface object is a toolbar button.
- [c12] 64. An Internet browser interface as recited by claim 62, wherein said interface object is a search window that enables the user to initiate a search at the predetermined Internet site regardless of the Internet site to which the computer is connected via the Internet browser at the time the search is initiated.
- [c13] 65. An Internet browser interface as recited by claim 62, wherein said interface object comprises an ActiveX control that enables user customization of said interface object.
- [c14] 66. An Internet browser interface as recited by claim 62, wherein said interface object comprises a Plug-in control that enables user customization of said interface object.
- [c15] 67. An Internet browser interface as recited by claim 62, wherein the predetermined Internet

site maintains user-specific information for a plurality of users, including the user of the computer and Internet browser, wherein said interface object causes the Internet browser to establish a connection to the predetermined Internet site when the Internet browser is first activated and to receive information specific to the user of the computer and Internet browser from the predetermined Internet site, and wherein all or part of said user toolbar is dependent upon the information, specific to the user of the computer and Internet browser, received from the predetermined Internet site.

[c16] 68. An Internet browser interface as recited by claim 67, wherein said interface object causes the Internet browser to periodically re-establish a connection to the predetermined Internet site while the Internet browser is activated to receive additional information, specific to the user of the computer and Internet browser, from the predetermined Internet site, and wherein all or part of said user toolbar is dependent upon the received information and additional information.

[c17] 77. A system for controlling an Internet browser interface displayable by an Internet browser on a display of a computer said system comprising:
a server, said server including a program accessible over the Internet by a user of the computer for controlling the Internet browser interface; and
a file downloadable by said server to the computer for controlling the Internet browser interface in the form of an added user toolbar as part of the browser interface and offering user toolbar functionality in addition to that provided by the Internet browser prior to said file being downloaded that remains available to a user of the computer regardless of the Internet site to which the Internet browser is caused to navigate subsequent to said file being downloaded.

[c18] 78. A system as recited by claim 77, wherein said downloadable file causes a user toolbar to be displayed on the display of the computer as part of the Internet browser interface.

[c19] 79. A system as recited by claim 78, wherein said downloadable file causes an interface object to be displayed as part of said user toolbar.

[c20] 80. A system as recited by claim 79, wherein said interface object enables a user of the computer to customize the user toolbar and comprises an ActiveX control.

[c21] 81. A system as recited by claim 79, wherein said interface object enables a user of the computer to customize the user toolbar and comprises a Plug-in.

- [c22] 82. A system as recited by claim 79, wherein said interface object is a toolbar button.
- [c23] 83. A system as recited by claim 79, wherein said interface object is a search window that enables a user of the computer and Internet browser to initiate a search at a predetermined Internet site regardless of the Internet site to which the computer is connected via the browser at the time the search is initiated.
- [c24] 84. A system for controlling an Internet browser having a browser interface displayable on a display of a computer, said system comprising:
a server for downloading files; and
a file, downloadable by said server, said file controlling the Internet browser so that the Internet browser enables a user of the computer to perform functions via a toolbar that is part of said browser interface, said toolbar and said functions not being available to the user via the browser interface prior to said file being downloaded.
- [c25] 85. A method as recited by claim 53, wherein the file is caused to open when the Internet browser is activated so as to establish a link between the file /computer /and the predetermined Internet site, and wherein the file receives information from the predetermined Internet site for defining all or part of an interface object.
- [c26] 86. A method as recited by claim 85, wherein the file periodically causes the Internet browser to establish a link between the computer and the predetermined Internet site and receive additional information from the predetermined Internet site for defining all or part of an interface object.
- [c27] 87. A method of controlling an Internet browser user interface displayable by an Internet browser on a display of a computer, and enabling a user of the computer and Internet browser to access and navigate the Internet and to receive and display one or more Web pages from one or more Internet sites, including the display of a Web page from a predetermined Internet site, the Internet browser having a bounded user interface area containing at least one Internet browser toolbar having at least one toolbar button providing predetermined functionality to the user of the computer and Internet browser, the Internet browser further having a bounded display area for displaying Web pages, the area for displaying Web pages being a separate area from the user interface area of the browser, said method comprising the steps of:
(a)providing, at the predetermined Internet site, access to a program for controlling the Internet browser interface; and

(b)making available for downloading by the predetermined Internet site a file for adjusting the bounds of the user interface area if necessary and for causing the display, within the bounds of the user interface area of the browser, of a user toolbar that, by virtue of its being downloaded, is added to and appears in and remains entirely within the bounds of the user interface area of the browser as part of the user interface of the browser without overlying anything that was displayed in the bounds of the user interface area of the browser prior to downloading and without overlying the display area, said user toolbar making additional functionality that is not part of the Internet browser prior to download available to the user after download, such that once the user toolbar is displayed the user toolbar remains displayed within the bounds of the user interface area of the browser and said additional functionality remains available to the user regardless of a subsequent Internet site to which the Internet browser is caused to navigate after download.

- [c28] 88. A method as recited by claim 87, wherein the user toolbar includes an interface object and is customizable by the user to provide user-selected functionality in the user toolbar.
- [c29] 89. A method as recited by claim 87, wherein the file comprises an ActiveX control.
- [c30] 90. A method as recited by claim 87, wherein the file comprises a Plug-in.
- [c31] 91. A method as recited by claim 88, wherein the interface object is a toolbar button.
- [c32] 92. A method as recited by claim 88, wherein the browser also contains an address window in which a user can enter web site addresses to which the user desires the browser to navigate, and wherein the interface object is a search window, independent of the address window and independent of any search capability of the browser prior to download of the user toolbar, which search window enables the user to enter a search term in the search window and initiate a search at the predetermined Internet site regardless of the Internet site to which the computer is connected via the browser at the time the search is initiated or what web site address is present in the address window at the time the search is initiated.
- [c33] 93. A method as recited by claim 87, wherein the predetermined Internet site maintains user-specific information for a plurality of users, including the user of the computer and Internet browser, said method further comprising the step of making available for downloading by the predetermined Internet site, after download of said file and automatically at a subsequent activation of the Internet browser, without the necessity for the user to navigate to the predetermined Internet site and regardless of any home page that

the browser is programmed to navigate to upon activation, user information specific to the user of the computer and Internet browser for defining all or part of the user toolbar and wherein all or part of the display of the user toolbar is dependent upon the user information downloaded by the predetermined Internet site.

[c34] 94. A method as recited by claim 93, further comprising the step of making available for downloading by the predetermined Internet site additional information specific to the user of the computer and Internet browser, for defining all or part of the user toolbar, and wherein all or part of the display of the user toolbar is dependent upon the downloaded additional information.

[c35] 95. An Internet browser interface displayable by an Internet browser on a display of a computer, the Internet browser facilitating connection between the computer and one or more Internet sites including a predetermined Internet site, the Internet browser having a defined user interface portion and a defined web page viewing portion and at least one Internet browser toolbar within the defined user interface portion, said browser toolbar having predetermined functionality available to a user of the computer and Internet browser, the Internet browser further facilitating display in the defined web page viewing portion on the computer display of one or more Web pages from the one or more Internet sites, including display of Web pages from the predetermined Internet site, said Internet browser user interface, after being enabled via connection to said predetermined Internet site, including a persistent user toolbar within said defined user interface portion and outside the defined web page viewing portion and not overlying anything displayed in the user interface portion prior to the user toolbar being enabled, so as to create the visual impression that the user toolbar is an integrated part of the Internet browser user interface, the user toolbar providing additional functionality in addition to said predetermined functionality which additional functionality is provided as part of the Internet browser interface along with and in addition to the Internet browser toolbar while the Internet browser is activated, regardless of which one of said one or more Internet sites the computer is connected to via the Internet browser.

[c36] 96. An Internet browser interface as recited by claim 95, wherein said user toolbar includes an interface object and is customizable by the user.

[c37] 97. An Internet browser interface as recited by claim 96, wherein said interface object is a toolbar button.

- [c38] 98. An Internet browser interface as recited by claim 96, wherein the browser also contains an address window in which a user can enter web site addresses to which the user desires the browser to navigate, and wherein the interface object is a search window, independent of the address window and independent of any search capability provided as part of said Internet browser, which search window enables the user to initiate a search at the predetermined Internet site regardless of the Internet site to which the computer is connected via the browser at the time the search is initiated or what web site address is present in the address window at the time the search is initiated.
- [c39] 99. An Internet browser interface as recited by claim 96, wherein said interface object comprises an ActiveX control that enables user customization of said interface object.
- [c40] 100. An Internet browser interface as recited by claim 96, wherein said interface object comprises a Plug-in control that enables user customization of said interface object.
- [c41] 101. An Internet browser interface as recited by claim 96, wherein the predetermined Internet site maintains user-specific information for a plurality of users, including the user of the computer and Internet browser, and wherein, after download of said file and automatically at an activation of the Internet browser subsequent to said download, software that is related to operation of said user toolbar instructs said computer to establish a connection to the predetermined Internet site independent of any home page to which the browser is programmed to navigate when the browser is initially loaded and without the necessity for the user to navigate to the predetermined Internet site, to receive from the predetermined Internet site user information specific to the user, and wherein all or part of said user toolbar is dependent upon the user information received from the predetermined Internet site.
- [c42] 102. An Internet browser interface as recited by claim 101, wherein said software periodically re-establishes a connection to the predetermined Internet site while the Internet browser is activated to receive additional information, specific to the user of the computer and Internet browser, from the predetermined Internet site, and wherein all or part of said user toolbar is dependent upon the additional information, and wherein said connection occurs independent of any web page to which the user has navigated and independent of any home page to which the browser is programmed to navigate upon activation of the browser.
- [c43] 103. A system for controlling an Internet browser user interface displayable by an Internet

browser on a display of a computer, said Internet browser having a bounded user interface area containing at least one Internet browser toolbar having at least one toolbar button providing predetermined functionality to the user of the computer and Internet browser, the Internet browser further having a bounded display area for displaying Web pages, the area for displaying Web pages being a separate area from the user interface area of the browser, said system comprising:

a server, said server comprising a program accessible over the Internet by a user of the computer for controlling the Internet browser interface; and
 a file downloadable by said server to the computer for causing the display, within the bounds of the user interface area of the browser, of a user toolbar that, by virtue of its being downloaded, appears in and remains entirely within the bounds of the user interface area of the browser as part of the user interface of the browser without overlying anything that was displayed in the bounds of the user interface area of the browser prior to downloading, said user toolbar making additional functionality that is not part of the Internet browser prior to download available to the user after download, such that once the user toolbar is displayed the user toolbar remains displayed entirely within the bounds of the user interface area of the browser and said additional functionality remains available to the user regardless of a subsequent Internet site to which the Internet browser is caused to navigate after download.

- [c44] 104. A system as recited by claim 103, wherein said downloadable file causes an interface object to be displayed as part of said user toolbar.
- [c45] 105. A system as recited by claim 104, wherein said interface object enables a user of the computer to customize the user toolbar and comprises an ActiveX control.
- [c46] 106. A system as recited by claim 104, wherein said interface object enables a user of the computer to customize the user toolbar and comprises a Plug-in.
- [c47] 107. A system as recited by claim 104, wherein said interface object is a toolbar button.
- [c48] 108. A system as recited by claim 104, wherein said browser prior to download has an address window and wherein said interface object is a search window that enables a user of the computer and Internet browser to initiate a search at a predetermined Internet site regardless of the Internet site to which the computer is connected via the browser at the time the search is initiated and regardless of any address present in the address window at the time the search is initiated.

[c49] 109. A method as recited by claim 108, wherein the file is caused to open upon activation of the Internet browser so as to establish a link between the file and the predetermined Internet site, which link is independent of any home page that the Internet browser is programmed to navigate to upon activation, and wherein the file as a result of said link receives information from the predetermined Internet site for defining all or part of an interface object.

[c50] 110. A method as recited by claim 109, wherein subsequent to activation of the Internet browser the file periodically re-establishes a link between the computer and the predetermined Internet site to receive additional information from the predetermined Internet site for defining all or part of an interface object.

[c51] 111. A system for controlling an Internet browser user interface displayable by an Internet browser on a display of a computer, and enabling a user of the computer and Internet browser to access and navigate the Internet and to receive and display on the computer display one or more Web pages from one or more Internet sites, including the display of a Web page from a predetermined Internet site, the Internet browser having a bounded user interface area containing at least one Internet browser toolbar having at least one toolbar button providing a predetermined functionality to the user of the computer and Internet browser, the Internet browser further having a bounded display area for displaying Web pages, the area for displaying Web pages being a separate area from the user interface area of the browser, said system comprising:

- a server for downloading files; and

- a file downloadable by said server to the computer for adjusting the bounds of the user interface area if necessary and for causing the display, within the bounds of the user interface area of the browser, of a user interface object that, by virtue of its being downloaded, appears in and remains entirely within the bounds of the user interface area of the browser as an integrated part of the user interface of the browser without overlying anything that was displayed in the bounds of the user interface area of the browser prior to downloading, said user interface object making additional functionality that is not part of the Internet browser prior to download available to the user after download, such that once the user interface object is displayed it remains displayed entirely within the bounds of the user interface area of the browser and said additional functionality remains available to the user regardless of a subsequent Internet site to which the Internet browser is caused to navigate after download.

[c52]

112. The system according to claim 111 wherein the interface object is a search window for

receiving search terms.

[c53]

113. A system for adding functionality to a user interface displayable on a display of a computing device capable of communicating with the Internet, said system comprising:

a server, said server comprising a program, accessible over the Internet by a user of the computing device, for controlling the user interface;

a file downloadable by said server to the computer for causing the display, within the bounds of the user interface, of an interface object that, by virtue of its being downloaded, appears in the user interface making additional functionality that is not part of the user interface prior to download available to the user after download, such that once the interface object is displayed the interface object remains displayed within the user interface and said additional functionality remains available to the user regardless of other functionality available to the user via the user interface after download; and

wherein said additional functionality is in the form of a search window in which a search term can be entered to enable a search to be conducted at a predetermined Internet site regardless of any other functionality or activity available to the user through said user interface so as to engender an affinity between said user and a provider of said predetermined Internet site.